NEVADA DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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Post secondary education programs used to be widely available in prisons in the United States, especially after the notorious Attica rebellion in 1971, which left 43 dead. Among the demands of the inmates, who were pressing for improved prison conditions, was a better education program. This demand was met, not only at Attica but also in prisons around the country. Over the next decades, prison education flourished. Then, in 1994, Congress voted to eliminate Pell Grants for federal and state prisons, despite strong resistance from the Department of Education.

Claiborne Pell, the longtime Rhode Island senator who was largely responsible for establishing Pell grants in 1972, when they were known as the Basic Educational Opportunity Grants opposed congress's ruling stating, "as I have often said, education is our primary hope for rehabilitating prisoners. Without education, I am afraid most inmates leave prison only to return to a life of crime."

Jeff Mellow, Director of New York City University's Criminal Justice Ph.D. program added, "The research is very consistent that post-secondary education has a much greater effect on reducing recidivism among this population than getting your GED."

Jon Marc Taylor, Indiana State Reformatory Extension Program writes: Why Should We Care? Here is an excerpt from his article:

Before prisoners became ineligible for Pell Higher Education Grants there were more prisoner-students in American prisons that there are presently; although, the penal population today is ***twice*** the size it was then. Three years after the financial aid expulsion, prison-based college programs and enrollments had declined by half, with most all-penal systems reporting negative changes in their higher education opportunities. State systems, reacting to the example and loss of federal funding, eliminated prisoner-students eligibility from their grant programs altogether (e.g., Utah).

Yet over the years the Pell Grant appropriation has doubled, without one grant or one cent assisting prisoner-college students. Education investments are approximately $2 million in economic stimulus and $375,000 in state tax revenues during each graduate's working lifetime. This return on investment in the prisoner-student becomes further manifest when factoring in all the socio-economic savings from significantly reduced criminal behaviors, coupled with the increased state and federal tax revenues, and the productive and consumptive economic stimulus generated by the more highly educated worker. Consider this positive economic outcome as opposed to the all-too-common disruptive anti-social actions and demand for revenue-draining social services that recidivistic offenders can create.

Really, though, why should it matter? So what if convicted felons don't have the opportunity to earn college educations while serving their sentences? The answer is: because they get out. It's in society's best interest criminologically, economically, penologically and socially to provide and even encourage prisoners to complete as much education as possible. The more education prisoners acquire, the safer, more stable, and richer our commonwealths will be. In other words, succinctly put by a former director of the American Correctional Association, "If you're sitting next to a convicted felon on the bus, would you rather he spent seven years in prison opening his mind and learning a skill, or staring at a crack in the wall?"

Higher Education for Prisoners

This month, a small contingent of prisoner reentry support organizations, known as the Education From the Inside Out Coalition, plans to meet with key members of Congress in an effort to get Congress to revisit the idea of making prisoners eligible for Pell Grants. The Education from the Inside Out Coalition is a nonpartisan collaborative of criminal justice and education advocates, led by the College and Community Fellowship and The Fortune Society's David Rothenberg Center for Public Policy.
If interested in restoring grants to inmates visit their website:
http://www.collegeandcommunity.org/Pell_Grant.html.

Stagecoach Robbery –Fact or Fiction?

Can a story be just too good to be true? A much-told tale of a Carson City area stagecoach robbery in the late 19th century fails to hold up under scrutiny. People still search for the loot somewhere in the vicinity of Nevada State Prison. The story, however, is pure invention, first appearing in a book called *Pots O' Gold* in 1935.

Former Prison Warden Matt Penrose is credited as the author of the pot-boiler, although the work was written by confidence man and convict John K. "Jack" Meredith according to Nevada historian Phil Earl. Whatever the nature of the authorship, people were misled by the stage robbery story and treasure hunters have been on a wild goose chase ever since.

We are not told when the "Wells Fargo stage" robbery occurred. The "gold bullion" worth $60,000 was being shipped to the U.S. Mint in Carson City from the Comstock. The Mint first produced gold and silver coins in February 1870, although bullion deposits were accepted in 1869 as the mint had expected to issue its first coins in that year.

By January 1870, the Virginia & Truckee Railroad operated between Virginia City and Carson City. Shipping heavy bars of bullion using Wells Fargo Express was much easier and faster by train than a stagecoach and much safer when it came to the prospects of a hold-up. A stagecoach line would have been hard-pressed to compete with the V&T Railroad. Arguably then, 1869 was the only year in which a stagecoach could have transported bullion from the Comstock to the Mint. The story claimed the bullion was gold and weighed 300 pounds. Comstock bricks at that time were mostly silver with some gold and would have weighed 3000 pounds.

According to Penrose, the stage had passed through the milling town of Empire in eastern Ormsby County and was on the final leg of the trip, a few short miles to Carson City. The driver and the guard, believing they were no longer in danger with the state capital in sight, relaxed their vigil, only to find four armed robbers jumping out of the sagebrush and waylaying the stagecoach. At the point of a gun, the "treasure boxes" were dumped to the side and the stage proceeded to Carson City on a dead-run.


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A posse was soon formed and rushed to the site of the robbery where it picked up the trail of the robbers. The highwaymen had not traveled far when three of the four men were killed in a pitched gun battle. The person who was captured was described as a Mexican, and later versions of the Penrose story by other authors claim that the man's name was Manuel Gonzales. "In due time," wrote Penrose, "the Mexican was tried and sentenced to twenty years in prison."

Gonzales, we are told, would not divulge where the bandits had hidden the gold bullion and later claimed he could see the location from his prison cell window. After some eight years a governor pardoned Gonzales because the prisoner had contracted consumption and the authorities and Wells Fargo hoped that upon his release he would make an effort to retrieve the stolen bullion. While that did not happen, an "old Dutchman" who ran a butcher shop in Carson City befriended Gonzales and finally convinced the career stagecoach robber to take him to the hiding place. As fate would have it, just as the two men were about to travel to where the bullion was stashed, "the Mexican," wrote Penrose, "was seized with a hemorrhage, and died in a few minutes."

Why then have no newspaper accounts documenting a robbery of this magnitude ever been found? Detective, James B. Hume and Howard Hickson's history of the Carson City mint are also mute on the subject. – by Guy Rocha, former Nevada State Archivist

Northern Nevada Correctional Center/Stewart Conservation Camp Saddle Horse Training Program

The Northern Nevada Correctional Center/Stewart Conservation Camp Saddle Horse Training Program is a cooperative partnership between the Bureau of Land Management (BLM), the Nevada Department of Corrections (NDOC), and the Nevada Department of Agriculture (NDOA). The program gentles and trains wild horses for adoption. About 40-60 wild horses are trained and adopted at the facility each year. The correctional program offers personal growth opportunities for inmates, while supplying the public with a source for well-started horses.

"A lot of guys learn how to really work for the first time through this program. They also learn about patience and making the right decisions."

Carefully selected and supervised inmates learn various stages of animal care and training. Through this program, they gentle, halter train and saddle train horses. Each horse receives 120 days of training, but they are still "green-broke". They will need daily training and handling when they arrive at their new home. A horse is considered successfully trained when it can accomplish the following:

- Easy mounting and dismounting
- Knows the commands for walk, trot, lope and keeps its head and body collected.
- Can turn either direction, stop and back up on command
- Can pick up all four feet
- Can load and unload in a 4-horse trailer

"Often an inmate has one horse that he works with and gets to name. Inmates learn a trade and the responsibility of having a job while horses are taught to trust humans, and be saddle and bridal trained. Both a bit spooked at first, the inmate and the wild horse learns to trust each other and form a bond."

Happy Halloween

Carson City's Ghost Stories—A handful of historic buildings in Carson City have been the subject of colorful tales involving specters and ghosts. One of the best known "haunted" houses is the Governor's mansion. For many years, staff and overnight guests at the Governor's mansion at 600 N. Mountain Street have reported seeing and hearing a woman in a long white dress followed by a young girl wandering the second floor. Despite numerous sightings, no one is quite sure of their identity or why they haunt the mansion, although some have speculated that they are former First Lady Una Dickerson and her daughter, June Dickerson, the only child ever born in the house. Additionally, it is said that sometimes when a person stands in front of an antique Grandfather clock on the first floor of the mansion, he or she can feel a mysterious cold air or cold breeze.

The Brewery Arts Center is also the subject of ghostly reports. Several visitors to the building have reported that they have felt as if they were being watched or talked to, and heard unexplainable noises. One witness claimed to have seen a man dapperly dressed in a brown checked suit with a vest and yellow tie. The ghost is believed to be James P. Maar, a one-time officer in the local Masonic Lodge (which met for many years in the building) who was in charge of keeping order in the building. It is said that he is always polite and acts like a gentleman.

The Edwards House at 204 N. Minnesota St., is another haunted residence that, according to local lore, houses a ghostly housekeeper. In the late 1800s, Mrs. Maria Anderson served as the housekeeper and nanny for the Edward family. It is said that her favorite furnishing was a piano that was shipped around the Cape to Carson City. The piano never needs dusting—even today—because the ghost of Mrs. Anderson continues to keep it clean. Additionally, several people have reported seeing Mrs. Anderson sitting in the home's big bay windows—like she once loved to do when she was alive.